

GENERAL RECALL SEPT 1978

THOMAS HANNON

by Thomas F. Hannon, Seale
USN. (Radio Striker)

INOTE: This account was turned over to us by Harold Roiland, who was a Radioman with Tom. Tom was subsequently Killed In Action after his miraculous escape from the OKLAHOMA. His was the first account of that incident to be put down on paper. It was written just days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. ED.

At the start of the attack I was in number 6 casemate, mess-striking. I had climbed thru the gunport onto the forecastle. From there I had a good view of the friendly planes that were bombing Ford Island with sand bombs - or so I thought! I didn't know they were Jap planes until I saw the clouds of smoke start to pour into the sky. Then I saw a Jap torpedo plane go flying low across the water, drop its load and zoom away. The torpedo hit the OGLALA. The alarm sounded to take cover and a second later to man the battle stations.

I felt the first torpedo hit while I was still in the casemate; the second while I was on the 2nd deck near the soda fountain. It knocked me against the screening of the fountain and already the ship started to list to port. Water from the explosion cascaded over the main deck aft and poured down a grate that was near the soda fountain and drenched all hands. I met Cymerman there.

We both went below, down thru the hatch to the 3rd deck, thru the Carpenter Shop, down another ladder thru the hatch into the

Cobbler Shop and then into my battle station, Radio IV.

Radio Four was already manned by Merton R. Smith, RM3c; Norman O. Roberts, Seale; George J. Thatcher, Seale and Harold S. Roiland, Seale. Harold had the Battle phones on. We set Zed. The hatch wasn't hard to set, but the ventilator fittings were faulty and we usually had a hard time getting them to stay set. This time we were lucky and they stayed secured.

By this time we had been hit twice, I think - I lost count of the hits. The ship had a bad list to port by now. The lights flickered and went out; the Battle Lights came on. Then Roiland yelled that the Battle phones were dead. Roberts tried the telephone and I tried the sounder - but nothing doing. All were dead. By now the list was really bad; we couldn't stand on the deck, so we unset Zed on the hatch to try to get in contact with the rest of the ship.

By this time the word had been passed to abandon ship - and even if we couldn't hear it, we could feel that it was just about time for it. Roiland was unable to unset the condition of readiness that was set on the hatch leading to the Carpenter Shop - we couldn't get out! We had about a 45 degree list to port then. I was standing upright with one foot on the deck and one foot on the bulkhead. Back to Radio Four we went, crawling up the wire screening of the Cobbler Shop, hand over hand, into the compartment. The lights went out. It was black. The ship was on its beam's end - everything was flying around. Benches, books, buckets and the heavy field equipment that was stored there came tumbling down on us. The ship went over - and we within it - went over too; from the deck, to the bulkhead, to the overhead.

None of us were hurt. We were all bumped and bruised, but that was about all. Water was pouring up a ventilator opening in the Cobbler Shop; gas had come from somewhere and we all started to cough and choke.

Then the gas quickly cleared and we could breathe with relative comfort.

The Quartermasters in Steering Room Aft had unset Zed on their hatch and came out into the Cobbler Shop. From our compartment we could see the light of their flashlight. We didn't know who they were, so we slid down into the Cobbler Shop again. The sea had filled the shop about waist high and was coming in fast. When we found out to whom the light belonged - we both went back to our respective Battle Stations.

Again we pulled ourselves up and into Radio Four. The ship was not exactly upside down. Roiland had gotten lost when we climbed - he lost his sense of direction; not that any of us had any to mention. All our movements were by the light of matches. By lighting matches and yelling to him, he finally made out the way, and up he came. All this time the Cobbler Shop was being filled with water from the open ventilator. This ventilator was behind the screening, so it was impossible to plug it up.

All hands helped shut the hatch and tried to dog it down, but when the ship had turned over the dogs had become reversed and what was normally the direction to secure them, only brot them hard against their stops

This was a problem for a second or two, only - for we had to work fast to keep the water out. I don't know how much the hatch weighed, except it was exceedingly heavy with the ship being on an angle. They must have opened and closed the hatch five or six times before it was secured - and then they missed one dog! Roiland, Smith and Thatcher did the hardest work. I remember the hatch that led into the void next to the compartment; so while the rest of the fellows were trying to close the hatch, I made for the corner of the compartment where I hoped to find the hatch. The hatch in question was overhead on the deck. There was a table that ran around two sides of the compartment against the bulkhead, and it was only by this table were we able to work on the hatch. I reached up and caught the underside of the table and pulled myself up so that I was sitting on the underside of the table. I don't remember where I picked up the wrench for the dogs on the hatch, but I did. Cymerman came over with a piece of burning paper so I could see, but the space I occupied became so hot, he had to put it out. By its brief light, I could see Roberts, Thatcher, Roiland and Smith working like mad to shut the hatch against the rapidly rising water. I fitted the wrench to the dogs in the escape hatch and found that they turned easily enough, but I couldn't open the hatch. I pushed and pulled - but nothing doing. Roberts came up to help me but neither of us could do anything. Now no more matches.

The main hatch had been secured; all but one dog which Roiland and Smith did not know had been reversed. Roiland kicked the heel off his shoe trying to make the dog catch. It would have been too much work to undog that whole hatch just for one dog and we were afraid the water in the next compartment would rush in on us before we could get it closed again; so we decided to leave it as it was.

Up by the escape hatch, I was getting dizzy from lack of air and had to climb down. Someone else took my place.

We were all soaked with perspiration and it literally ran off us. In fact, I was under Roberts when a steady stream of sweat poured down from his body on to me. I thought for a second that we had a leak in the compartment, until I realized that it was warm water.

From about seven or eight places men were tapping out S-O-S's on the bulkheads. As time went on, they stopped one by one

until the only tapping that could be heard was the Quartermaster and someone else tap- ping i-m-i!

We sat or lay down in the most comfortable position we could find and talked for a few minutes. We didn't feel much like talking, now that the excitement was over and there was nothing to do but wait. We could hear firing and loud explosions above and around us. We all felt that the res- cue work would not begin until the attack was over, and I was glad to find out -we were wrong.

We sat there, each man to his own thots and a lot of things went thru my mind. It had gotten cold and the bulkheads had started to sweat. We could hear the water gurgling in the compartments beneath us. It was an awful sound.

At times the air would get so foul that it would make your tongue swell in your mouth. I would be panting for air and then I would begin to get drowsy and I believe we were in a state of unconsciousness most of the time. Occasionally, the air would freshen - and ourselves with it. We would talk a bit, but not much. I remember Roiland saying, "If I get out of this, I think I'll go home and marry my girl". However, when we got on the *SOLACE*, he said he had changed his mind.

Roberts had a watch, but it was dark and he couldn't see to tell the time. it was so dark that it seemed to be something solid and beyond the swing of your arms, nothing else ex isted. I was lying next to the forward bulkhead when I thot I heard voices on the other side. I knocked. There were seven men in there; they had come from number three handling room. They had a light and plenty of pea- coats to keep warm. They had no escape hatch in the Lucky Bag. I talk ed to Young, Seale for a while and then it got thick and so we quit,

. Then we heard drilling on the hull up forward. Remembering I could talk to the Lucky Bag bunch thru the bulk- head, I stumbled across the compartment and called to the Quartermasters in Steering Room Aft. A fellow named Bear (*He meant Willard Beattie.ED*) who came aboard ship' with me, answered. He said that he heard the rescue party working on the hull of the ship; but that was all he had to say. I found two blankets that belonged to Blackard, RMIC who was in charge of the gang aboard ship. I gave them to someone and found an old white jumper for myself.

We had noticed that the pounding of the S-O-S's had just about stopped, so one of our fellows began to pound. It was just at this pounding that someone topside heard it and reported it. Soon we heard drilling near. It would start and then stop. Everytime it stopped, I think we all held our breath until it started again.

Then with a loud hiss, like escaping compressed air, water started to come in. I guess that when they penetrated the bottom. of the ship, it allowed the air in our compartment to escape,- and as air went out, water came in. The water was coming in fast. Thatcher and Roiland started to work on the escape hatch again, when the hatch flew open and a man stood there with a light and said, "Take it easy, boys!" We were out of there in no time flat. Someone said it was nine o'clock, Monday morning - but we didn't believe him. The void was oily and I slipped a couple of times. The workmen passed us from one to the other and then thru THE hole----- to light.

A Boatswain, (*formerly*) from the *NEVADA* assisting the rescue wanted to know if any others were still down there. We told him that there were, and I went back in the ship to show the men where to find them.

I looked at the compartment that I had just left and it was three-quarters full of water. If the workmen hadn't gotten to us first .. A motor launch took us to the *USS SOLACE*, and the next day we were on duty again.